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TAGS: [PREL](#) [UN](#) [UNMIK](#) [PGOV](#) [EU](#) [BE](#)  
SUBJECT: UPDATED BRIEFING ON KOSOVO STATUS NEGOTIATIONS

REF: STATE 135734

Classified By: POLCOUNS TED ANDREWS. REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Poloff met with Thomas Antoine, MFA Director for the Balkans, to provide an updated briefing on Kosovo status negotiations (reftel). Antoine expressed pessimism that a negotiated solution would be reached in 2006 while agreeing that every effort should be made to reach a settlement this year. Antoine was concerned that Serb interests be satisfactorily represented in any final agreement. In quoting Belgian Foreign Minister DeGucht, he emphasized that no solution would be lasting "if it is not mutually acceptable."

¶2. (C) Antoine said Belgium thought Serbs needed to be "more flexible" in talks and had urged a more constructive engagement from the Serbs. He emphasized, however, that Belgium was strongly against marginalizing the Serbs and nothing must be imposed against their will. In his view, the Serbs had minimal trust in the negotiation process because "any implication that Kosovo will be independent takes the flexibility out of the negotiations." More incentives were needed for Belgrade.

¶3. (C) Antoine stressed the need for quick implementation of strict standards, particularly on minority rights. He said Belgian FM De Gucht felt strongly that final status could not be effectively implemented without tangible progress on implementing standards. He thought Serb cooperation would come easier then.

IMBRIE